

94 Convention To Celebrate Diversity of Kansas Theatre

The diversity of theatre in Kansas will be the theme of this year's annual convention according to President-elect Ric Averill, and what better time to show the uniqueness of Kansas theatre than during AKT's 20th anniversary year. Held at McPherson College this year, the convention will begin Thursday evening, March 3, with a kick-off performance by the Thunderbird Theatre and a pizza party.

The talented group of young performers from Thunderbird Theatre of Haskell Indian Junior College will present "Songs of Life" directed by Pat Melody. This group has performed all over the Midwest. They offer a wonderful, beautifully costumed vision of Native American fables, including Coyote and Rabbit, in a composite hour of delightful myths.

Yes, AKT is 20 years old this year, and the workshops to be offered at the convention are as numerous and diverse as our membership. A sampling of workshops that will be offered includes: "Video/Film Audition" with Heather Laird of Wright Laird Casting in Kansas City; "Grant Writing" with David Gresier; "Theatre With At-Risk Students" with Twila Schneiders; and "Write It! Act It! How and Why You Wanna Teach It!" with Janice Suzanne Smith. Check the convention brochure you will be receiving shortly for a complete listing of workshops.

Also performing will be the "Illustrated Theatre Company," which was a big hit at the '92 convention. The Seem-To-Be Players have a claim on diversity by featuring a re-telling of "The Bremen Town Musicians" in an urban setting, casting the Donkey as a Junkman, the Dog as a Homeless Bag Lady, the Cat as a Hearing-Impaired Girl, and the Rooster as a Street Kid.

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Search Opens For AKT Executive Director

The Board of Directors announces the opening of the search for a part-time Executive Director. Duties will include: management and maintenance of the AKT Central Office; bookkeeping and recordkeeping; maintenance of membership files; maintaining correspondence and communication among Divisions and members; preparation and publication of The Marquee; maintenance of the AKT Script Library; grant writing and follow-up; locating and encouraging new memberships; assistance as required by

members; disbursements of funds; registration and setup at conventions; and other duties as defined by the Board of Directors.

A fully detailed job description is available from the AKT Central Office. To apply send a letter of application, resume, vita and references to Bill Brewer, AKT President, at the AKT Central Office, 230 Curtis Street, Hutchinson, KS 67502-2422. Deadline is December 15, 1993.

Interviews will be scheduled as soon as possible. Expected starting time is January, 1994.

University/College Theatre Festival Canceled

Tony Naylor, U/C Division Chair, announced last week, that the theatre festival to be held at Hutchinson Community College on November 19 & 20 has been canceled due to lack of participation.

Although many schools throughout the state expressed an interest in being a part of the festival, a number of reasons were given as to why they could not participate. The dates for the festival conflicted with many schools' schedules, and several others said they did not have enough time to prepare for the festival this year but would like to be a participant next year.

With more advanced planning and preparation, Naylor feels that the U/C Division can definitely host a festival of workshops and performances next year. Please do all you can next year when plans are being made for this festival. It is an excellent opportunity to showcase the young talent that can be found across the state of Kansas in our colleges and universities.

AKT ENDOWMENT FUND Established

In accordance with the current long-range plan, the AKT Board of Directors has established an endowment fund for future programs and services. Additional funds are currently being sought and accepted. No minimum donation is necessary.

If you are interested in becoming an AKT Endowment Fund Donor, please contact Bill or Lou Brewer at the Central Office.

Theatre Matters....

by Mary Guaraldi

Editor's Note: The following article was originally presented as the keynote address at the 1993 USITT Conference and Stage Expo in Wichita this past March. Guaraldi, who is the associate artistic director of the Missouri Repertory Theatre, has graciously given us permission to reprint her address.

There is something very sensual about a pen poised over clean white paper -- In the moment before writing, all possibility exists. Then comes the moment when a pen poised over paper needs to start work. Exit possibility. Enter panic. Why was I excited about the chance to speak to you? What is it exactly that I wanted to share? Why does all this matter to me and, I hope, to you.

To the rescue came an old friend of mine with whom I have had an on-again, off-again love affair since college. Bertolt Brecht said, "Every art contributes to the greatest art of all: the art of living." This is the beginning and the end of my speech, for what else is there to say? And yet, as Sam Donaldson said about Clinton's economic plan, "The devil is in the details."

Why have I chosen to give my energy and commitment to the theatre? When I was a kid of five, theatre entered my life in

the form of elocution lessons. When I was six or seven or eight, I began producing plays in my backyard. The sets were blankets hung on a clothesline, the actors were my brothers, sisters, and cousins pressed into service, the costumes were boxes of Halloween costumes and discarded clothes from parents and friends. The ticket price was five cents. High tech and high finance it wasn't. It was, however, great fun. I loved the idea that I could be someone different with no limit on the whos and whats involved.

When I was in high school I saw Vincent Gardenia as Eddie Carbone in Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge*. The feeling that I had as I watched Catherine kneel over Eddie's body at the end of the play has stayed with me to this day. That image and the feeling it evokes have been my companions, coming to my mind at odd moments, pushing me to think about that man and his life.

Since then I have been conning and cajoling people to go on the adventure of theatre with me whether as audience or artist. Now others work with me to do far more than a blanket on a clothesline and a flashlight for special effects could ever do. But I am still drawn to theatre for the same reason: It is a ticket to any time in history, to any place in the world, to any person I can conjure in my imagination.

I am (she said, without actually mentioning her age) now significantly older than that little girl. My time is especially valuable to me because I have come to realize in a very intimate way that once a moment of my life has passed, it will never return. Bluntly put, time has eternity. I do not. This fact of life wasn't important to me at the age of 16 or 25 or 30. Then I believed, I assumed -- whether I articulated it or not -- that I was immortal. As I have become older, I have become selfish of time -- wanting to spend it, not to waste it, wanting to be a part of people and events that give me a sense of life and its possibilities.

In a time when the veneer of civilization is falling away in so many places, the arts can be a mirror for the soul. Theatre provides a context for

understanding ourselves and our world. It provides a respite from the chaos and fear that appear to be engulfing us each time we listen to the news or read a newspaper. It provides a haven for us to share the aspects of life common to all men and women. To laugh, to mourn, to celebrate, to think, to be disturbed, to feel. It should be a routine part of our lives and our neighbors' lives and our children's lives. In a world that so constantly seems out of control, fragmented beyond repair, enduring images of humanity -- of ourselves, of our lives -- can lead to moments of enlightenment and connection to others.

In his book *The Shape of Content*, the artist Ben Shahn wrote, "It is the images we hold in common...that have created the human community...and imbued it with value." Our job is to capture on stage the universal, timeless aspects of human life that make man man. The written word is flat. The screen is flat and distorts life by either diminishing or enlarging it. Only the stage has a truly human proportion that says, "We are you, you are us. You are not alone."

The human spirit portrayed on the stage has not changed since the advent of man because theatre is rooted in the reality of human nature. The need for love, the need for respect, the need for productive work, and the need to know that we matter, that our lives make a difference, all bridge time and national boundaries. Theatre requires the courage to look forward and backward while being grounded in the present. Classics and plays about to become classics are the continuum of history that provide a background for each of us and for our lives. They are a unique link between us and past generations, between us and future generations.

Great plays resonate because they grasp the universal humanity in each of us. Isn't this, after all, still the world of Sophocles: "Grief teaches the steadiest minds to waiver." And the world of Shakespeare's so tragically fallible Lear:

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The Marquee is published as a membership service of the Association of Kansas Theatre, Inc. Members are encouraged to submit information and articles about their work, special interests, honors/awards, or issues of concern to the general membership.

The mention of a product, service, publication, conference, workshop, meeting, etc., in The Marquee does not constitute endorsement or sponsorship, nor is it an indication of quality by The Marquee or AKT unless specifically stated.

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Lou Brewer
Interim Editor

'94 Convention To Celebrate Diversity

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Chanute Community Theatre always enters wonderful and challenging material at the bi-annual AACT/FEST. We thought this year would be an excellent opportunity for them to showcase some of this innovative theatre.

Our respondents, speakers, and leaders are an excellent array of Kansas and national figures with distinctive viewpoints on what makes theatre work. Featured will be Daisy Kabagarama, whose area of concern is social issue and forum theatre; David Spangler, who does wonderful work each summer in Salina; Mary Giraldi from UMKC whose recent article in the ITT newsletter inspired the entire board to get to know her better; and our Keynote Speaker, Norm Fedder, who has done considerable work in Theatre for the Mentally and Physically Challenged.

Averill urges everyone to look over the one year, three year, and five year plans that were published in the August/September issue of *The Marquee*. Many projects are underway by AKT members and numerous issues need to be decided, including sites for future conventions, the award structure for AACT/FEST, playwrighting forums for retreats and readings, and more.

Register early and be a part of Kansas Theatre in '94.

UPCOMING KANSAS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

NOVEMBER

Stepping Out

Nov. 11-13 @ 8 P.M.
Hutchinson Theatre Guild

Nunsense II

Nov. 19-21, 26-28
Dec. 2-4, 9-12
Check for times by calling (913) 843-7469
Lawrence Community Theatre

Some Things You Need to Know Before the World Ends

Nov. 18-21, check times by calling 628-4225
Ft. Hays State University

Lend Me A Tenor

Nov. 18-21, 23-24, 26-28
Call 827-6126 for times
Salina Community Theatre

DECEMBER

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Dec. 9-10-11-12 @ 7:30 P.M.
Dec. 12 @ 2:00 P.M.
Liberty Hall, Lawrence, KS

Charlotte Cushman

Dec. 1-4 @ 8 P.M.
Emporia State University

From the President...

As things go from the Central Office, the AKT "year" is off to a very good start! Memberships continue to appear in the mailbox nearly every day (HAVE YOU SENT YOURS IN???) along with returns of the needs assessment survey.

May I pause a moment to encourage you to fill out both the membership application and the needs assessment if you haven't done so and send them in? It's important that we receive both as soon as possible! The Board needs the results of the needs assessment, and the organization needs YOUR membership!

I've noticed in the past that the inflow of memberships seems to gather steam right after the first fall rush and then slacks off until near or at Convention in March. I know, I know, you're busy! But, it doesn't take that long, and it's not that expensive! We need your membership because there is strength in numbers. We need your membership to insure that we are getting information to everyone who needs it. We need your membership to keep up the mailing list. We need your membership to help secure the future of AKT! Send it in today! Don't wait until Convention time!

Regarding information sharing: the Board has mandated that Lou publish a Membership Directory by January. The plan is that we will publish a Directory

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Bushnell Appointed Community Theatre Chair-Elect

After the recent resignation of Edith Hinrichs as Chair-Elect of the Community Theatre Division, the AKT Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Rick Bushnell to that post. An art instructor at Chanute High School since 1981, Bushnell teaches courses in drawing, printmaking, ceramics, painting, and photography to high school students.

Bushnell has been an active participant with the Chanute Community Theatre since 1981, also. He is presently serving as their President, a post he also held from 1984-1988. Performing lead roles in six productions, as well as serving as set designer for 20 productions, shows that that Bushnell is just the type of person that all community theatres need and want. Rick recently completed his tenth directing assignment with the September '93 production of *Camelot*.

An adjunct instructor for Neosho County Community College, Bushnell teaches courses in ceramics. His hobbies include singing with the community chorus for Christmas Vespers and working on watercolor paintings.

When asked about this commitment, Bushnell replied, "I am very excited at the prospect of serving on the AKT Board of Directors. I only hope I can make a positive contribution to the organization on behalf of all community theatres across the state. The very thought of that scares me to death, but I'm willing to accept the challenge."

CALL FOR UNPUBLISHED SCRIPTS

for a script-in-hand reading at CONVENTION '94. Submit scripts to either Susan Sutton or Ric Averill by February 15 for final selection.

The cast, which will be selected prior to Convention, will be directed for performance by Susan Sutton.

From the President...

(Continued from page 3)

containing the names of all paid members (individual and organizational) that we receive by December. An Update will be produced by the end of Convention to add to that Directory. That Update will be computer generated after the close of registration at Convention. I would again encourage you to get your membership in so that we have less to update, and you will have the information you need as soon as possible.

Other matters of note:

It was sad to see the need to cancel plans for the November U/C Festival. I was hopeful we could continue that event as an off-Convention mini-festival. With work and more advance planning next year, perhaps we still can. Tony Naylor, U/C chair, is planning to have events at Convention to offer to students, etc. for the Division in place of the mini-festival. We'll keep working the bugs out of this one.

Please note the article regarding the search for an Executive Director. If you or someone you know is interested, available, inexpensive and well-organized, please send in your letter of application, resume, etc. If you want a detailed job description, please contact me at the Central Office toll-free number ASAP. The Board would like to begin interviews very soon.

CONVENTION TIME!! It's just around the corner, and coming up fast. This issue has a look at the plans Ric, Laurie, and others have made about our 20th Anniversary Convention. Plans are to send you a Convention brochure and pre-registration form very soon on the heels of this Marquee. Look for registration incentives and please, seriously consider the advantages of pre-registering! ABOVE ALL, MAKE PLANS NOT TO MISS THIS BIRTHDAY BASH! It'll be fun, exciting, and very rewarding to discover the diversity in Kansas theatre. Enough said for now...

See you in the theatre!

Bill Brewer

AKT President

Call For Workshops, Papers & Performances

THEATRE OF DIVERSITY: KANSAS '94

AKT Convention

McPherson, Kansas / March 3-6, 1994

Name _____	Title _____
Organization _____	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____	Work Phone _____
This is a Proposal for a: _____ Performance _____ Workshop _____ Paper _____	
Title of Proposal _____	
Number and Names (if known) of Participants: Number _____	
Names _____	
Description of Proposal _____	
Special Needs _____	
Preferred Times: _____ Thursday Evening Kickoff _____ Friday Morning _____ Friday Afternoon _____ Friday Evening _____ Saturday Morning _____ Saturday Afternoon	
Note: Saturday Evening will be held for a special 20th Anniversary Banquet and Bash and a surprise performance!!	

AKT IS LOOKING FOR YOU!!

Yes, this will be the 20th year of the Association of Kansas Theatre and the 20th convention. We hope to have an exciting convention with something for everyone! This is your opportunity to let us know what you can provide or what you would like to see. Fill out the form above and return it by December 1, 1993, to:

Ric Averill and Laurie VanderPol-Hosek, Convention Co-Chairs
c/o Seem-To-Be-Players / P.O. Box 1601 / Lawrence, KS 66044

THEATRE MATTERS...

(Continued from page 2)

Poor naked wretches,
wheresoe'er you are,

That bide the pelting of this
pitiless storm,

How shall your houseless heads
and underfed sides,

Your loop'd and window'd
raggedness, defend you

From season such as these?

Visit any street in any American city
today to see how alive Lear's words are.

And of August Wilson's Ma Rainey:

*It sure done got quiet in here. I never
could stand no silence. I always got to
have some music going on in my head
somewhere. It keeps things balanced.
Music will do that. It fills things up. The
more music you got in the world, the fuller
it is...You don't sing to feel better. You
sing cause that's a way of understanding
life.*

Art has always been a buffer between man and the despair he has encountered in his attempts to understand life. Years ago I became haunted by the story of a group of children who had put butterflies on the walls of a concentration camp. Even in hell these children found grace, found a way to be free through attitude and art. Those butterflies are still there --on those walls. Those children, those butterflies are still there in a play written about their experiences, bringing this experience to thousands of others.

Their art inspired art. It will continue to echo their story long after they are dead, moving us in profound ways to understand that we cannot control events or people. The only things that we can control are the thoughts that shape our attitudes. Theatre is a map through this difficult terrain. It has given me gifts concrete and spiritual over the last 37 years. It has captured my imagination and feelings to become a lifelong commitment, a romance of surprising proportions.

Bill Gardner, the former producing artistic director of the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, frequently said to me that every decision made in the theatre is an artistic

decision: Hiring, salaries, office layout--all affect the artistic life of a theatre. On a practical level, this means that because of limited resources --time, people, money--choices must be made about what can and cannot be done for any given project. The purchase of that state-of-the-art lighting system will preclude the purchase of a new fog machine. The purchase of an expensive wig means that two more costumes will need to be pulled from stock and restyled.

On the most philosophical level, it means that each of us is responsible for the vitality of the theatre, for making the whole experience greater than the sum of its original parts for our audiences and ourselves. This is as true for box office personnel as it is for the master carpenter as it is for the director. We are responsible for the collaboration that creates a unique world on stage visually, aurally, and ultimately, emotionally.

To do this we all juggle the time/money/people equation. You can do without any one of them, but without any two, life is difficult if not impossible. People, however, are the make-and-break of this formula.

When I am most frustrated by life in the theatre, I daydream of sitting alone in a garret writing exotic novels or painting brooding landscapes. The lure of these solitary activities has probably been more than apparent to each of us at at least one point in our careers. Then, of course, something happens -- The vision actually makes it on the stage, and I am glad to be surrounded by the people who have made that happen with me.

We are all part of a tradition centuries old. We are preceded by a line of voices who have each shared the gifts of spirit and imagination they have been given with others who have shared with us just as we will continue to share. I am grateful to the mentors I have had along the way who have understood that theatre requires doing and who have made it possible for me to do -- mistakes and all. I am grateful for the hours spend listening to theatre talk over drinks...the time when true theatre history is taught.

So, finally, in the darkness of the theatre a community is created --The palpable, throbbing feeling that goes from

the stage to the audience and from the audience to the stage ties artists and audience together recognizing our common needs, exploring our differences, and attempting to arrive at a sense of truth that means our time has been spent well.

By its nature theatre is the most ephemeral of arts -- For each audience there is only one chance of communicating that can be affected by variables as disparate as the temperature of the theatre, the smoothness of scene changes, whether or not an actor got caught in traffic on the way to the theatre. No performance can ever be recreated or experienced in the same way again. In the best of all possible worlds, our shared memory of a particular performance makes us a part of each other even after the lights go out and we separate.

When theatre speaks with a haunting eloquence, it is because images and language have assumed a meaning beyond meaning. They speak to us more strongly together than either could have alone. It is so often the magic of these images that remains long after a performance is over provoking us to thought and feeling.

Theatre is a passionate enterprise and we should be passionate in our commitment to creating theatre that is a call to joy, to thought, to change. We are here to ask questions, not to find answers in our complex world. Our community is our family, our friends, our country, and, increasingly, our world. Each time one of us pulls, others feel the tug.

If 10 or 20 or 30 people have found beauty or light or comfort or understanding in my work, I have been successful. If my collaborations have spurred my colleagues to thought or insight, I have been successful. I believe and therefore can say to you clearly and loudly: "Theatre matters." What we do is worth our time and attention and care. It is a good way, a wise way, to spend a lifetime!

With apologies to another man with whom I have had an ongoing affair, William Faulkner: The voice of the theatre need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

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The Marquee

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